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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000221

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: NEW NORTH KIVU GOVERNOR'S PRIORITIES: SECURITY,
RECONCILIATION AND DEVELOPMENT

REF: KINSHASA 102

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (SBU) Summary: Julien Paluku, governor-elect of the DRC's North Kivu province, has three main priorities for his first months in office: security, ethnic reconciliation, and economic development. Paluku admits he faces a difficult challenge but contends the province and its political leaders are willing to work together to achieve them. Many of North Kivu's political class are positive towards Paluku but want to see some immediate results. Paluku's success, however, may ultimately be determined by factors outside his control. End summary.

12. (U) Julien Paluku was elected governor of North Kivu province January 26 by the provincial assembly with 26 of the 42 deputies' votes (reftel). The former mayor of Beni and Butembo in the province's Grand Nord region, he is an ethnic Nande whose political patron is Foreign Affairs Minister-designate Mbusa Nyamwisi. He ran as an independent after President Joseph Kabila's Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP) selected a different candidate -- also a Nande -- to represent it. Paluku said despite this snub from the AMP leadership, he supports the coalition and President Kabila.

PRIORITY ONE: SECURITY

13. (SBU) Paluku discussed his vision and priorities for the province in a February 3 meeting with PolOff in Kinshasa. He said the most important element is security, without which it will be impossible to achieve anything else. He claimed he was not sufficiently briefed to offer an opinion on the so-called "mixage" process that is creating new brigades from soldiers loyal to dissident General Laurent Nkunda and to the government. He said that "mixage" at least ended the fighting that erupted in November and December 2006, prevented the spread of a wider provincial conflict, and thus was a limited success.

14. (C) Paluku said the only way to resolve North Kivu's security situation is to remove Nkunda from the area. He said Nkunda's continued presence causes fear in some of the province's ethnic communities, driven in part by historical biases against the Tutsis. Paluku warned that military action against Nkunda would be ineffective. He stated that if the choice were left to him, he would find any way possible to convince Nkunda to go into exile.

PRIORITY TWO: ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

15. (SBU) Paluku's second priority is ethnic reconciliation. He admitted that much of the province's insecurity rises from long-standing suspicions among the major ethnic groups, particularly the Hutu, Tutsi, Hunde and Nande. He said some of these communities' complaints are legitimate but many are based on misunderstandings, rumors, jealousy, and simple ethnic hatred. Reconciling these groups will be another key to restoring peace and security.

16. (SBU) Paluku, who has yet to be sworn in, said one of his first acts as governor will be to convene an inter-ethnic council to find common ways to address the problem. He said he hoped that as a Nande from the Grand Nord, he could overcome some of the ethnic rivalries that dominate discussions in the provincial capital Goma. He said he believed the Tutsi community in particular needs some representation in the provincial government, especially since no Tutsi was elected to the provincial assembly. Paluku promised he would appoint at least one Tutsi to his cabinet.

PRIORITY THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

17. (SBU) The third immediate priority for Paluku is economic development, coupled with serious efforts at eliminating corruption. Paluku said there are more than 2,300 miles of roads in North Kivu which need rehabilitation. By repairing these routes, trade would be opened up not just within the province, but with Rwanda, Uganda and to other points in the

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DRC such as Kisangani. Paluku emphasized that reform and modernization of the province's hospitals, schools and agricultural sector is needed to improve economic and social conditions.

18. (SBU) Measures to end corruption will focus on regulation of transport and border controls. Paluku said another of his first acts will be elimination of illegal roadblocks the FARDC has established to exact bribes and "taxes." Paluku has already ordered civil administrators and the FARDC to remove several tax barriers around Sake, 15 miles northwest of Goma. In addition, Paluku wants to regulate and codify border crossings and customs inspections points, which he claimed are thoroughly corrupt, charge illegal entry fees, and allow material to enter and exit unchecked.

POSITIVE REVIEWS, SO FAR

19. (SBU) Many Goma-based political figures are positive about Paluku. Provincial assembly president Leon Bariyanga, a Hutu, told us in Goma February 7 Paluku definitely has the capacity and expertise to run the province's government from his experience as mayor and territorial administrator. He suggested that Paluku's Grand Nord origins may allow him to rally the province's various ethnic groups towards common goals. Bariyanga warned, however, that Paluku's success will depend on whether the region's security can be assured.

110. (SBU) North Kivu civil society president Jason Luneno said Paluku's victory was not simply due to his support from the Nande community, which has a majority in the provincial assembly. He said Paluku's election with 26 votes to his nearest competitor's 17 demonstrates he has wide support. Rene Abandi, spokesman for the Nkunda political front National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), however, disagreed with that assessment. He said the CNDP and Nkunda are taking a wait-and-see attitude about Paluku and are eager to see if Paluku provides "adequate" Tutsi representation in his government.

COMMENT: WORTHY GOALS, BUT PERHAPS NOT ATTAINABLE

¶11. (SBU) Comment: Paluku has established a set of worthy goals, but he will be unable to achieve them alone. MONUC remains an essential factor for the province's security in the short term. Long-term stability in the province, however, requires political solutions which depend on the central government and the development of a capable FARDC. Kinshasa's handling of Nkunda, and his actions, will be key in the short to medium term. As well, the availability of resources, also largely dependent of Kinshasa, will go far to determine the provincial government's ability to function. Paluku's Nande origin may impede his reconciliation efforts in the highly-charged political atmosphere of Goma where ethnic rivalries are never far from the surface. End comment.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

¶12. (SBU) Paluku, 38, was born in Buramba, North Kivu, on December 13, 1968. He holds degrees in biochemistry from the Institute of Rural Development in Bukavu and in community health from the Free University of the Great Lakes in Butembo. From 1994-1998, he was a teacher at the Mikenko Institute, the Virunga Medical School, and the Interdisciplinary Center for Development and Education in Goma. In 1998 he was named assistant administrator of Lubero territory in North Kivu, and served as the territory's administrator from 1999-2003. He was appointed mayor of Butembo in 2003 and served as Mayor of Beni from 2005-2006. He was elected as a provincial deputy from Butembo in October

¶2006.
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